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REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR
REFUGEES, QUESTIONS RELATING TO REFUGEES, RETURNEES
AND DISPLACED PERSONS AND HUMANITARIAN QUESTIONS

Assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa

Report of the Secretary-General

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In its resolution 48/118 of 20 December 1993, the General Assembly appealed to Member States, international organizations and non-governmental organizations to provide adequate and sufficient financial, material and technical assistance for relief and rehabilitation programmes for the large number of refugees, voluntary returnees and displaced persons and victims of natural disaster and the affected countries; requested all Governments and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to pay particular attention to the protection of special needs of refugee women and children; called upon the Secretary-General, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat and United Nations humanitarian agencies to continue their efforts to mobilize humanitarian assistance for the relief, repatriation, rehabilitation and resettlement of refugees, returnees and displaced persons, including those refugees in urban areas; requested the Secretary-General to continue his efforts to mobilize adequate financial and material assistance for the full implementation of ongoing projects in rural and urban areas affected by the presence of refugees, returnees and displaced persons; and requested the High Commissioner to continue her efforts with the appropriate United Nations agencies, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and intergovernmental, governmental and non-governmental organizations in order to consolidate and increase essential services to refugees, returnees and displaced persons.

2. The General Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to submit a comprehensive and consolidated report on the implementation of the resolution to the Assembly at its forty-ninth session.

II. ACTIVITIES OF THE OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS
HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

3. Since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 48/118, Africa has continued to be plagued by the problems of refugees and forced population displacements.

4. At present, the continent hosts over 7.2 million refugees, a third of the world's refugee population, of whom 5.3 million are assisted by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). In addition, an estimated 20 million Africans are considered to be internally displaced.

5. Internal conflicts, human rights violations and breakdowns of law and order, in combination with the negative effects of poverty, drought and famine, continue to create unprecedented levels of hardship and suffering in many parts of the continent. These same factors continue to precipitate and cause massive refugee outflows and internal displacement of persons in some countries and to impede access to and delivery of protection and humanitarian assistance to refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons.

6. The persistence of ethnic strife and conflicts, human rights abuses, deterioration in economic development and social progress and lack of responsible and accountable governance have continued to cause new refugee outflows in a number of countries and necessitated the deployment of emergency assistance programmes or adoption of other appropriate humanitarian and political measures in order to attain durable solutions for refugee problems and to avert further refugee outflows through early warning mechanisms as well as timely intervention by the relevant United Nations agencies, intergovernmental, governmental and non-governmental organizations.

7. While refugee flows impose intolerable security, social and economic burdens, adverse environmental consequences caused by the large presence of refugees in the countries that have generously continued to provide asylum, the existence of national policies or practices that have a negative impact on the security, safety and well-being of refugees have no doubt exacerbated the root causes of refugee outflows and population displacement in some African countries.

8. Prospects for durable solutions have been and continue to be undermined by renewed tensions or conflicts in some countries, such as Angola, Liberia, Rwanda and Somalia. UNHCR and other United Nations agencies, as well as non-governmental organizations, together with the relevant authorities in countries of asylum and return, are continuing to plan repatriation and reintegration programmes in countries where conditions are conducive. Notable among these is the repatriation of over 1 million Mozambican refugees, which has so far been a successful and exemplary operation.

A. West Africa

9. Attempts to find a peaceful and lasting solution to the problems in Liberia through the implementation of the Cotonou Agreement have virtually failed. Although the Liberian National Transitional Government was sworn in on 7 March 1994, the Government could not extend its authority and control beyond Monrovia. Despite the deployment of forces of the Economic Commission of West African States Military Observer Group (ECOMOG) and the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL), the disarmament process came to a halt and the elections scheduled for 7 September 1994 could not take place. A new peace accord was signed at Akosombo, Ghana, on 12 September 1994 by the major warring factions, which agreed to extend the mandate of the present coalition Government to 10 October 1995, the new date set for elections. However, at the time of writing, fierce fighting still continued in various parts of Liberia, with no sign of an improvement in the security situation.

10. Political unrest and the worsening security situation in Liberia has led to further displacement of nationals towards Monrovia as well as the flight of Liberians into the neighbouring countries. In early September 1994, Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire recorded new influxes of some 50,000 refugees from Liberia.

11. Despite efforts made by various relief agencies, assistance to internally displaced persons, refugees and returnees within Liberia has been limited because of security problems, especially since August 1994 when the level of hostilities increased dramatically. All relief operations in Upper Lofa have been suspended since the end of 1993, and Gbarnga has also been inaccessible from Monrovia since July 1994. United Nations agencies are now assisting the affected population only in accessible areas in and around Monrovia.

12. The security situation in south-eastern Sierra Leone has worsened since January 1994. Continued fighting has led to the further displacement of nationals as well as some 40,000 returnees in the region. Assistance to this affected population has been limited owing to inaccessibility to the areas.

13. These developments present obstacles to a large-scale repatriation to either Liberia or Sierra Leone under UNHCR auspices. UNHCR will continue to provide assistance to refugees in the countries of asylum in the region and to assist spontaneous repatriation whenever possible. In the first three quarters of 1994, UNHCR assisted 161 Sierra Leoneans and more than 5,500 Liberians to return to their home countries.

14. At the end of January 1994, ethnic conflict in northern Ghana escalated into violent tribal warfare, which resulted in the displacement of approximately 150,000 persons. UNHCR is providing emergency assistance to the affected population to meet their immediate needs and to help rehabilitation upon return to their communities.

15. After several consultative meetings in 1993 and 1994, held jointly with the Governments of Mali and Algeria and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and UNHCR, a quadripartite agreement was signed between all four parties. Two separate tripartite agreements were also concluded with the Governments of Burkina Faso and Mauritania. These agreements created the

necessary conditions for UNHCR involvement in the Malian repatriation and rehabilitation programme, including a bilateral (Algeria-Mali) plan for a pilot repatriation operation. UNHCR established an office in Mali and reinforced it to monitor the implementation of this programme. However, since May 1994 the situation in northern Mali has been volatile, and owing to an increase in attacks by bandits, 12,000 Malians have fled to Burkina Faso.

16. The low rate of implementation of the Pacte National and the growing insecurity in northern Mali have hampered prospects for an organized repatriation programme in 1994.

17. In early January 1994, 8,000 Ghanaians fled into Togo because of violence between ethnic groups in northern Ghana. An emergency assistance programme was established for the benefit of this caseload.

18. Owing to the improvement of the situation in Togo and the formation of a new Government in June 1994, the total number of refugees decreased from 150,000 to 60,000 in Benin and from 150,000 to 100,000 in Ghana. This reduction is the result of spontaneous repatriation.

B. Central Africa

19. The signing of a peace accord between the Government of Chad and the Comité de Sursaut National pour la Paix et la Démocratie at Bangui, Central African Republic, on 10 August 1994 is an encouraging step towards the establishment of conducive conditions for voluntary repatriation. This will also lead to a more effective implementation of humanitarian assistance to refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons in Chad.

20. The quest of UNHCR for durable solutions on behalf of Sudanese refugees, is being pursued through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Africare and the Secours Catholique pour le Développement.

C. Horn of Africa

21. Faced with the daunting scale of humanitarian needs, creative and flexible assistance approaches continue to be adopted for refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons throughout the Horn of Africa.

22. At September 1994, Ethiopia hosted an estimated 271,000 refugees, comprising 180,000 Somalis in the east, 50,000 Sudanese in the west, 10,000 Djiboutians in the north-east and 25,000 Somalis and 6,000 Kenyans in the south. The repatriation of some 180,000 Somalis in refugee camps in eastern Ethiopia to north-west Somalia is a priority and is of primary concern. An estimated 400,000 refugees have already returned there spontaneously since 1991. This repatriation process has recently gained new momentum with the successful completion of an exercise involving the revalidation of ration cards in all Somali refugee camps, which provides the basis for registration for voluntary repatriation and for related logistical aspects for actual organized return movements to begin as soon as possible. Some 10,000 camp dwellers are expected

to return to north-west Somalia by the end of 1994. Meanwhile, the repatriation of Ethiopian refugees from the Sudan to Tigray and neighbouring provinces, which started late in 1993, continued at varying rates of return, both by road and airlift, into 1994, with 25,000 refugees having returned to date. Improvements in road conditions after the October/November 1994 rains will facilitate transportation of more repatriants by road from the Sudan. A further 25,000 Ethiopian refugees are expected to return before the operation is completed in early 1995.

23. UNHCR operations in Somalia continue to focus on the implementation of a returnee programme in north-west Somalia and on the cross-border operation from Kenya into the Geddo, Middle and Lower Juba regions of southern Somalia. Ongoing programme activities mainly involve the rehabilitation of community-based services and infrastructure, with the objective of enhancing the absorption capacity of returnee reintegration areas, much of which suffered considerable devastation during the civil conflict, particularly in north-west Somalia. Within this framework, quick-impact rehabilitation projects have been, and continue to be, implemented in such sectors as water, health, sanitation, education, agriculture/livestock and shelter in collaboration with United Nations and non-governmental organizations, in close cooperation and coordination with the local authorities. Despite these positive developments in the search for durable solutions, renewed security concerns have once more come to the fore in areas of UNHCR operation. Escalating insecurity owing to banditry/looting and hijacking of humanitarian assistance resources leading to loss of life and property of relief agencies is being reported more frequently than hitherto in the recent past in Somalia. The scaling down of United Nations forces and the general uncertainty surrounding the future presence of the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II) appear to be contributory factors in the heightening insecurity in southern Somalia, which may have serious implications for the continuation of humanitarian interventions in Somalia.

24. Following recent positive developments in other parts in the Horn of Africa, the prospects of finding a durable solution is brighter. Repatriation movements are gathering momentum. Practical plans are currently being finalized to begin the repatriation of Eritrean refugees from the Sudan to Eritrea in an initial movement involving 25,000 Eritreans as the beginning of an organized repatriation movement for an estimated 400,000 refugees. Some 100,000 refugees are estimated to have returned to Eritrea spontaneously. The repatriation of Ethiopian refugees in the Sudan will resume by land, once the rains in October/November are over. Some 25,000 refugees are expected to return by early 1995, in addition to some 25,000 refugees who have already been repatriated to Ethiopia. Similarly, in the immediate future, the first group of some 10,000 Ethiopian refugees from camps in Djibouti will begin their return journey, bringing to an end a long waiting period which began in December 1993.

25. Meanwhile, in the Djibouti refugee camps, preparatory measures are being taken to promote the voluntary repatriation of Somalis to north-west Somalia. There are close to 20,000 Somalis in the refugee camps in Djibouti. Parallel to the repatriation process is the ongoing transfer exercise from Djibouti to camps of refugees/displaced persons whose continuing presence in the city has overextended the social and economic services/facilities, with which the authorities can no longer cope. Some 15,000 Somali refugees in the camps have

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already registered for voluntary repatriation; their departure will accelerate the pace of the transfer exercise to the camps and the subsequent repatriation.

D. Southern Africa

26. The successful mass voluntary repatriation movement of Mozambican refugees from Malawi continues to proceed smoothly. The assisted refugee population of 1,058,500 at the beginning of 1993 had dwindled to some 200,000 by September 1994. Following the departure of refugees and upon the request of the Government, funds have been made available for the demolition of latrines and houses vacated by departing refugees. The cleared land is being used by local peasants for agricultural purposes. Dams are also being constructed to avoid soil erosion.

27. The continuing care and maintenance assistance to Mozambican refugees included a number of projects in Malawi to mitigate the environmental impact caused by the presence of refugees. These include reafforestation, energy conservation and fuel provision projects. Most of these activities are expected to continue into 1995.

28. While these measures have been significant, the overwhelming pressure from the exceptionally large number of refugees outweighed the mitigative efforts. The environmental degradation, which needs immediate and sustained restoration efforts, remains to be addressed in the post-repatriation phase, when the UNHCR presence and input will have been reduced. The Government of Malawi is about to launch an appeal to international donors for the rehabilitation of areas affected by Mozambican refugees. UNHCR will continue its efforts to sensitize a wide range of donors and to coordinate their input to the programme.

29. The UNHCR-organized repatriation operation for South African refugees and exiles was successfully completed on 31 December 1993.

30. UNHCR expenditure and allocations for assistance in Africa in 1993 totalled \$325.1 million, of which \$188.5 million were made available from general programme funds and \$136.6 million came from special programmes funds. The initial 1994 general programmes target approved by the Executive Committee at its forty-fourth session was \$164.3 million. The amount required for special programmes in 1994 was estimated at \$222.3 million at mid-year.

31. During the period covered by the present report, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat, on behalf of the United Nations system, issued appeals for emergency assistance to the populations affected by the crises in Angola, Burundi, Kenya, Liberia, Rwanda, the Sudan and Zaire. The humanitarian programmes outlined in these appeals are targeted primarily at internally displaced persons, refugees, returnees and other vulnerable population groups. Of a total of \$1.4 billion sought for emergency assistance to Africa, \$866.2 million has been received to date by the appealing agencies and organizations.

32. Recognizing the dual impact of the presence of refugees on the environment, and of the hostile environment on the well-being of refugees, UNHCR has been reinforcing its efforts to address environmental problems in the following ways:

(a) By adopting a more ecologically sensitive approach in the planning and implementation of refugee site management. For instance, an expanded provision of fuel and fuel-efficient stoves is increasingly being considered and an improved design for a drainage/waste water system is being applied in many sites;

(b) By undertaking studies in the sectors of shelter, water and sanitation to minimize the impact on the surroundings and to improve the conditions of refugee camps and settlements in an ecologically sound manner;

(c) By recognizing that refugees themselves are an important collective force for positive change. Through the People-Oriented Planning training programme and greater refugee participation in the development and implementation of UNHCR programmes, awareness of environmental conservation is being promoted;

(d) By providing funds for reafforestation projects implemented by government departments and non-governmental organizations, for example in Guinea, Malawi, Rwanda, the Sudan and the United Republic of Tanzania.

III. ACTIVITIES OF THE WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME

33. The strategy of the World Food Programme (WFP) is to assist refugees and internally displaced persons in their country of asylum or origin by endeavouring to meet their basic food needs where they cannot be met by other means. Where feasible, self-sufficiency among refugees and internally displaced persons is encouraged by promoting food production and other income-generating activities in the country of asylum or origin.

34. In the search for durable solutions, WFP encourages either the permanent settlement and integration of refugees in host countries or the repatriation to and reintegration in their countries of origin. Internally displaced persons are similarly provided food assistance to help in their resettlement. Increasingly, WFP gives priority to returnees and internally displaced persons in the targeting of rehabilitation and reconstruction assistance in countries affected by man-made disasters, through both emergency and development type activities. Such assistance gives specific attention to the continuum from relief to rehabilitation and development activities.

35. The above strategy is reflected in the close partnership established between WFP and UNHCR, which has since 1 January 1992 been manifested in the effective implementation of joint working arrangements to assist refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons. Under the current phase of these arrangements, WFP has continued to assume responsibility for mobilizing the totality of basic food requirements and related external transport and internal transport, storage and handling costs in all jointly assessed refugee and returnee and internally displaced person situations where the caseload exceeds

5,000 beneficiaries. WFP also handles internal transport and delivery of food consignments to the extended delivery points within the recipient countries concerned where it is also gradually assuming responsibility for the management of warehouses.

36. New WFP commitments of over 784,000 tonnes of food, together with related ocean freight and internal transport costs, were confirmed during the first half of 1994 for refugees, returnee and internally displaced persons operations in Africa. These operations have incurred costs of over \$352 million to WFP and target some 7.8 million persons in 16 countries. Current WFP refugee feeding operations are assisting over 7 million refugees and involve a food commitment of over 780,000 tonnes, valued at \$366 million, including related transport costs. The total number of internally displaced persons currently receiving WFP food assistance is over 10 million persons, mostly in Angola, Mozambique, Liberia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia and the Sudan. The combined commitments of WFP for these operations involve over 770,000 tonnes of food at a total cost of some \$385 million, including transport. Projected emergency requirements for refugee, returnee and internally displaced feeding operations in Africa during 1995 are expected to amount to over 2.2 million tonnes for some 14.3 million persons in some 28 countries.

37. Among the major refugee and internally displaced person operations in Africa in which WFP is involved are the following:

(a) In the Liberia region, WFP is assisting over 2 million victims of the three-year old civil conflict, of whom some 750,000 are refugees in Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone, with the remainder being internally displaced persons in Liberia and Sierra Leone. This operation involves an annual food commitment of around 200,000 tonnes;

(b) During 1993, WFP food aid was provided to nearly 1 million Mozambican refugees in Malawi, Swaziland, the United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The general peace agreement signed in October 1992 has encouraged many Mozambican refugees and internally displaced persons to return home. As of August 1994, over 1.3 million people had returned to their country, of whom over 100,000 returned during 1992 and 600,000 during 1993. Food assistance is provided to the returnees during reintegration, land clearance and planting. It is also provided to support the rehabilitation and reconstruction of roads, health posts and other community service infrastructure. The total WFP commitment to support refugees and returnees over the 18-month period ending June 1995 is over 370,000 tonnes of food;

(c) WFP is assisting some 930,000 refugees in Ethiopia, the Sudan, Djibouti and Kenya, with a 1993 commitment of more than 250,000 tonnes of food at a cost of over \$116 million. Brighter prospects for peace and stability in the region have already resulted in decreasing numbers of Somali refugees in Ethiopia and, to a lesser extent, Kenya. Plans are under way to assist in the voluntary repatriation of many of the more than 300,000 Ethiopian and Eritrean refugees in the Sudan, 200,000 Somali refugees in Kenya and 20,000 Somali refugees in Djibouti;

(d) In November 1993, WFP launched a massive relief effort to assist the victims of ethnic conflict in Burundi. Following the attempt to topple the Government in Burundi at the end of October 1993, WFP committed some 209,000 tonnes of food commodities to internally displaced persons within Burundi and for Burundi refugees in Rwanda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zaire. Food and transport costs amount to \$109 million for a caseload of over one million persons in Burundi and neighbouring countries;

(e) In Rwanda, following the civil conflict in February 1993, WFP began assisting displaced persons, with the caseload peaking at 900,000. A food commitment of 125,000 tonnes was made for this operation at a total cost of \$71 million. This assistance, which terminated in March 1994, was resumed a few months later under a new operation in response to the unprecedented civil strife in Rwanda following the April 1994 deaths of the Presidents of both Rwanda and Burundi in a plane crash. In response, WFP has so far approved new food commitments in the region for some 150,000 tonnes of food, valued at over \$100 million. Food resources for these activities have also been available from earlier commitments made to the earlier Burundi regional operation. Food assistance has mainly targeted over 700,000 internally displaced persons in Rwanda, 500,000 refugees in the United Republic of Tanzania and an estimated 1.7 million refugees in Zaire.

38. WFP is also assisting with the supply and delivery of food to several other smaller refugee populations in Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Congo, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania, Rwanda, Uganda, Togo, Zambia and Zaire.
